In his *Credo*, legendary *The Call of the Wild* author Jack London proclaimed, “I’d rather be ashes than dust!”

This affirmation of the human will to keep fighting quite appropriately inspired the title of Stick To Your Guns’ 2016 EP and first release for Pure Noise Records, *Better Ash Than Dust*. The Orange County, CA melodic hardcore quintet—Jesse Barnett [vocals], Chris Rawson [guitar], Josh James [guitar], Andrew Rose [bass], and George “Schmitty” Schmitz [drums]—tap into that spirit over the course of the collection’s five tracks.

“If we’re going to be fucked in the end regardless, I’m going to try and be ashes instead of dust,” affirms Jesse. “Ashes have dignity left. It means you fought as hard as you could and remained a bigger piece of something as opposed to just being annihilated to dust. Even with the social, political, and environmental climate, fight your hardest.”

Stick To Your Guns have done just that since their 2003 formation. In that time, the group built a diehard following over the course of five full-length albums including 2012’s *Diamond*, which debuted at #1 on *Billboard*’s Heatseekers Chart, and the John Feldmann-produced *Disobedient* in 2015. The latter garnered praise from *Alternative Press*, *Revolver Magazine*, *New Noise Magazine*, and *Rock Sound* who included it among the “Top 50 Releases of the Year.” Along the way, the band crushed stages everywhere from *Warped Tour* to sold out headlining gigs across the globe.

When it came time to begin work on what would become *Better Ash Than Dust*, the musicians agreed on one thing.

“We wanted to make more of a heavy record,” the frontman exclaims. “On *Disobedient*, we tried some different things, and it was great, but I was overthinking things so much. The EP is a reintroduction back into our way of doing things. It was so natural and free-flowing. Every moment was a joy. I felt like I connected with the band, the music, and the sound again.”

In order to fortify that connection, they headed to Toronto, Ontario for a five-day recording session with longtime friend Derek Hoffman behind the board producing and mixing.

“He has his ear to the ground when it comes to music in general,” says Jesse. “He mostly works with pop, indie, and alternative bands and doesn’t fuck with this world often. So, he brought a really great perspective to the table. It was a very relaxed, easy, and seamless transition working with him. We were all on the same page.”

*Better Ash Than Dust*’s first single “Universal Language” snaps into a thrashed-up riff before exploding on an unshakable chant. Lyrically, it lands a blow squarely in the face of hypocrisy.

“It’s about standing up for what’s right even if it’s not popular,” he goes on. “If you only speak in violence, that’s how people speak back. Look at what’s happening around you. When you see a horrific event happen, you have to ask yourself all of the questions.”

The title track sways between heavy and hypnotic, while “The Suspend” builds from an airy and ominous guitar into a searing and scorching scream.

“There are a lot of people in my life who did things I viewed to be small at the time, but when I look back, they’re humongous turning points,” he recalls. “As you get older, you realize how much your parents may have done for you. Everything in my life, most of it is due to them—especially my mother. They built this structure up tall and got me to a certain point, and I continue to build it. If I have my own family, I pull them up to higher levels.”

Ultimately, *Better Ash Than Dust* sees Stick To Your Guns delivering their most unbridled, unrestrained, and undeniable body of work to date.

“We can assume we’re all fucked up and doing the best we can,” Jesse leaves off. “That connects all of us. As a musician, if you can inspire someone to think critically and rationally of a greater good bigger than themselves, that’s amazing. Perhaps, there’s even a positive effect on that person and the community around them. Keep fighting.”